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INCREASING EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL STRENGTH THROUGH MEDITATION

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Strength. The dictionary defines strength as a quality of being that is "physically strong." Perhaps it's the other definition—the one that states it's the capacity of an object to withstand great force or pressure—that made us realize that strength isn't only about our physicality. Of course, one can be physically strong. But in this world, I have found in my own experiences that it's much more important to be emotionally strong than to be physically strong. Withstanding the pressures of day-to-day life and the sometimes-intense stressors that try to knock us down can be an incredible skill that leaves us feeling powerful.

Emotional strength, while the definition isn't always consistent, is defined mostly by how one responds to emotional stimuli and stress. The ability to respond openly and with vulnerability is one way in which we can be emotionally strong. Other ways to demonstrate this strength is by receiving emotional stimuli and environmental stressors and dealing with them gracefully by taking them in, processing them, responding honestly, and allowing yourself to handle the situation without hurting or lashing out at others. This goes hand-in-hand with mental strength, which many define as the skill to reframe negativity and resist influences that may weaken our self-confidence.

Why is this idea of strength on my mind so heavily? Well, it's been weighing on me. I'm currently going through a very difficult time, and I've found myself being shocked by the magnitude of people I thought were my friends who have decided to judge me without considering who I am and what they know of me. And I've found throughout these unpredictable stressors that I'm much stronger than I've ever given myself credit for. I feel the pain, sure. I experience the emotions. I process the thoughts. But I'm able to move forward gracefully knowing that I am stronger than I previously thought. I take an insult with grace, process it, think through it, and then release it rather than holding on to it. I've accepted my faults where they may lie, committed to doing better, and moved forward with lessons learned.

I've committed to meditating more while I am feeling down, mantras that allow me to feel stronger and more capable. For instance, in my meditation exercises, I've set aside time to encourage myself, "I am so much stronger than I credit myself to be." I've allowed my mantras to change as necessary, but they flow from sayings such as, "I can handle anything life throws my way because I am strong," to "Every day is a blessing, and each one only gets better as I move forward." Mantras have become key for me in building back my confidence and allowing me to feel stronger once again. In fact, mantras in meditation are a great tool for manifestation, for the law of attraction, and to build ourselves up to reach stronger and more healthy places.

If you've never meditated with a mantra before, I encourage you to open your Expand app and try to pull up a timed meditation, perhaps in Focus 12 or in Focus 15. And in the middle of your meditation, once you're in the groove, think about what you need most in your life right now. Let's say it's strength. You can tell yourself, "I am so much stronger than I realize," and say it with conviction. Believe it. The more you say it, the more you'll realize it's true. Give it a try for a week and note how your life changes once you begin using mantras regularly in meditation. It may not be for everyone, but mantras can be a great tool to utilize for many, especially if you need to find that extra boost of strength in your life. And I think it's important to remember, especially in times when you feel weakest, that everyone has the capacity to be strong. You just need to believe that you have the strength to tackle the world, and you can build yourself back up, one day at a time.